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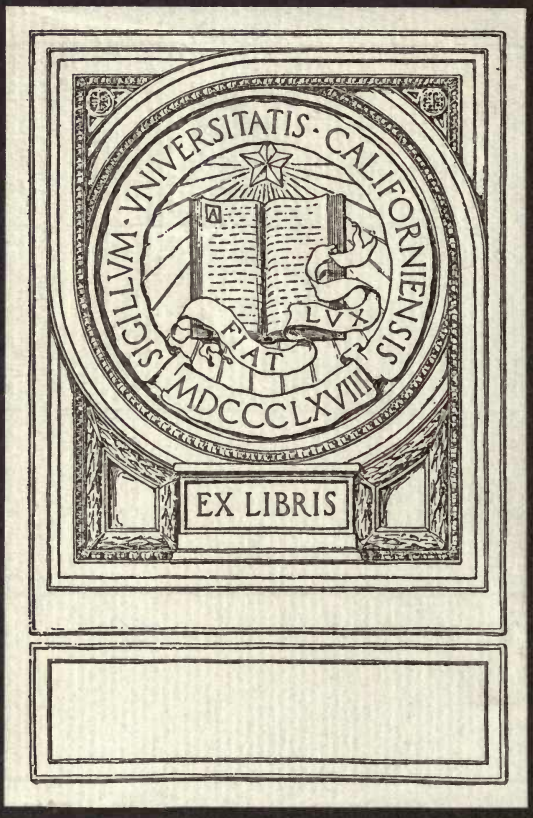
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DEPARTMENT OF TEXTILES

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

CATALOGUE OF ALGERIAN EMBROIDERIES

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880—1897 (p. 11). T. 62—1915 (p. 12). T. 63—1915 (p. 12).

Frontispiece.]

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

DEPARTMENT OF TEXTILES

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INTRODUCTION.

ALGERIA, now administered by a French Governor-General, has such a mixed population and its fortunes for many centuries up to a time within living memory have been so changing that it is almost a matter of surprise to find adequate memorials of its past achievements in the region of art still extant. The small collection of Algerian embroideries in the Museum, gradually accumulated as opportunity offered, was augmented in the month of June 1915 by a munificent gift from Mr. Clarke-Thornhill of examples secured by him in the country of their origin, at a time when the acquisition of such fine specimens was not so difficult as it has since become. This most acceptable gift has considerably strengthened the collection in regard to its extent, and at the same time has materially raised its quality. The principal purpose of this catalogue is to make known these new acquisitions to the wide circle of students who will be glad to benefit by Mr. Clarke-Thornhill's generosity.

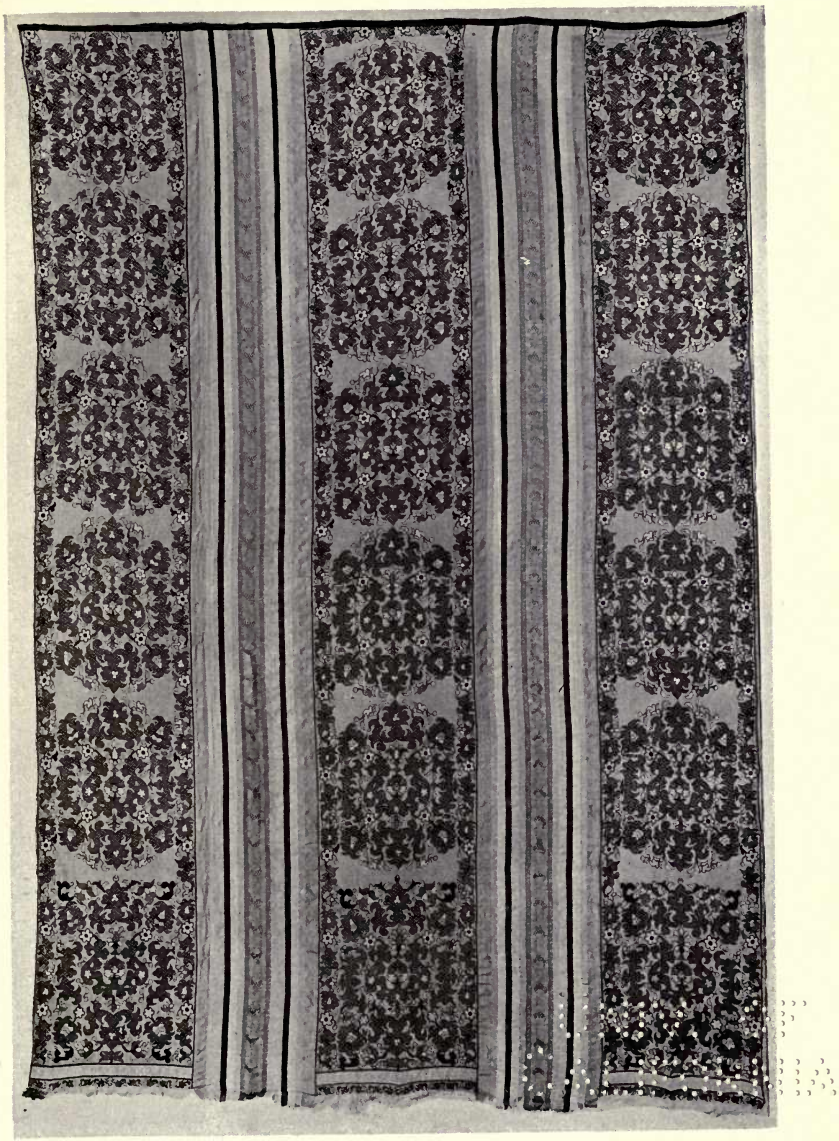
From the year 1516, when the Turkish sea-rover Barbarossa, called in by the Arabs to resist the power of Spain, assumed the sovereignty, Algeria was dominated by men of Turkish race for a period of more than three centuries. It is to the latter part of this epoch that most of the embroideries described in this catalogue must be assigned. The tradition established during the period in question survived the French occupation of 1830. Since that event Museums have been founded; a notable exhibition of the art of Algeria and North Africa was held in Algiers in 1905; and other efforts have been made to encourage the development of this and kindred types of Algerian artistic expression.

In view of these facts we may expect to find the same general characteristics in the specimens described in this catalogue, and it will be seen that they form a class distinct

from all others. It should, however, be remembered that the aboriginal Kabyles or Berbers, whose descendants still survive in considerable numbers, practise a much cruder kind of embroidery based on purely geometrical motives. This work is not represented in the collections. It is in the matter of design that the resemblance of Algerian to Turkish work is most clearly seen, but in the former there is less indication of the naturalistic rendering of floral forms, and the colour scheme is less striking, softer shades being used and subdued effects being aimed at.

The patterns are as a rule closely arranged over a large part of the surface of the fabric. They are based on floral motives, frequently grouped to form rows of pointed medallions. Linen, either closely woven (653–1893) or in the looser form known as "*étamine*" (T. 61–1915) forms the ground; cotton is occasionally employed (T. 60–1915). Silk, sometimes relieved with metal threads, is the material used for the pattern. Mauve in various shades is usually dominant throughout. There is a considerable variety of tone in different examples (T. 60 and 61–1915) and the mauve colour in a single specimen is often uneven, though not to a fault (654–1893). A fine deep red sometimes replaces mauve as the principal colour, and in these examples a deep blue is generally employed to an almost equal degree, both colours being outlined in dark mauve (267–1896; T. 391–1912; T. 59–1915). In such cases mauve has also a place among the colours used for small details of the pattern. Other subordinate colours, generally bright in tone, are sparingly employed. They are pale blue, green, yellow, white, pink, and red.

The colours are sometimes relieved by narrow borders of drawn work in white floss silk, generally forming geometrical patterns. There is usually one such band along the bottom of each embroidered panel in a curtain. The towels have at each end two of these bands edging a wide border (267–1896). Gold and silver sometimes take the place of the white silk (T. 59–1915). Threads of these metals are also occasionally employed in other parts of the work (T. 63–1915).



T. 61—1915. CURTAIN. 18th century. (p. 6.)

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332—1894. CURTAIN. 18th century. (p. 7.)

T. 61—1915. CURTAIN. 18th century. (p. 6.)

PLATE II.

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The objects on which the Algerian embroiderers have lavished their greatest skill consist for the most part of curtains, towel-scarves and head-kerchiefs. The curtains are hung before the doors of the apartments opening on the central court of an Algerian house. They always consist of three parallel vertical lengths, united by an elaborate arrangement of silk ribbons of varying width sewn together. The colours of these ribbons are selected from those found in the embroidery. There is generally a broad central ribbon woven with a floral pattern, flanked by a balanced arrangement of narrow coloured ribbons without ornamentation. These ribbons were probably for the most part imported from Italy or France. Both the towel-scarves (*tenchîfa*) and head-kerchiefs (*benîqa*) combine the functions of towel and head-wrapper, and are used by Algerian ladies at the public baths. The first are broad scarves, fringed at the ends, and embroidered with patterns spread over the whole ground. After the bath a *tenchîfa* is wound round the head so as to dry the hair by gentle pressure. Two or three of these towel-scarves may be used in succession; No. T. 391–1912 is a very beautiful specimen. The *benîqa* is more distinctively a head-dress. It is formed of a long panel narrower than the scarf. The embroidery is generally massed locally, chiefly in the part to be placed over the head, instead of covering the whole surface. The *benîqa* forms a sort of hood in the middle, with a long lappet on either side. The hood is placed over the head, the hair being dressed in two plaits round which the lappets are wound before being arranged on the top of the head. In some cases the place for the head is only indicated by a panel of embroidery (880–1897). In others the hood is shaped by stitching the sides together (T. 63–1915). A small embroidered linen panel (T. 62–1915) is included in Mr. Clarke-Thornhill's gift, but the purpose for which it was used is not known.

A curtain (T. 61–1915), included in the recent gift, is the best specimen of Algerian embroidery in the Museum. It is probably not older than the 18th century. It should be

compared with T. 60–1915, which belongs to the succeeding century. Such objects were made to be used, and it is probable that most of those now in existence are not older than the 18th century, although they no doubt continue the tradition of earlier work.

CATALOGUE.

T. 59—1915. Curtain, in three panels, of loosely woven linen (*étamine*), embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes. It is disposed in each panel as follows:—a rectangular compartment at either end (the upper one is incomplete) from which rises a border of curved floral stems along the sides of the panel; the rest of the pattern is symmetrically grouped so as to compose a row of four medallions. The foliations are mostly red and dark blue, which are the dominant colours of this embroidery, but some of them are mauve. The blossoms are white, yellow, mauve, green, brown, light blue, pink, and salmon-colour; they are outlined in dark brown silk. Each of the panels is united to the central one by a band composed of 11 strips of silk ribbon stitched together; the middle strip has a woven pattern of small floral sprays, between borders of chevron pattern, in colours on a salmon-coloured ground; five ribbons, narrower than the middle strip, but not of uniform width, are arranged on either side, in the following order of colours:—blue, white, purple, yellow, and salmon-colour. Each panel has, at its lower end, a narrow border of drawnwork with gold and silver thread embroidery, having a repeating pattern of lozenges. The panels are fringed.* 18th century. PLATE III.

L. 9 ft., W. 5 ft. 6 in. Given in 1915 by T. B. Clarke-Thornhill, Esq. Neg. no. 44686.

* The stitch employed in this curtain is stated by M. G. Marçais (L'Exposition, d'Art Musulman d'Alger, 1905) to bear the name of *maalka*, or *point diagonal*.

T. 60—1915. Curtain, in three panels, of cotton embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of delicate scrolls from which blossoms spring. It is disposed in each panel as follows:—a rectangular compartment at the lower end, from which rises, along the sides of the panel, a border consisting of a continuous wavy scroll bearing blossoms and tiny leaves; the rest of the pattern is symmetrically grouped so as to compose a row of five medallions. The scrolls are mauve, which is the dominant colour of this embroidery; the blossoms and some of the foliage are white, yellow, and various shades of red, pink, blue, and green. Each of the panels is united to the central one by a band composed of 11 strips of silk ribbon stitched together; the middle strip has a woven pattern of small floral sprays, between borders of chevron pattern, in colours on a salmon-coloured ground; five ribbons, narrower than the middle strip, of nearly uniform width, are arranged on either side, in the following order of colours; green, white, purple, yellow, and light blue. Each panel has, near its lower end, a narrow border of drawn-work with white and coloured silk embroidery, having a repeating pattern of rosettes within hexagons. The panels are fringed. Probably early 19th century. FRONTISPIECE.

L. 7 ft. 11½ in., W. 5 ft. 3 in. Given in 1915 by T. B. Clarke-Thornhill, Esq. Neg. no. 44683.

T. 61—1915. Curtain, in three panels, of loosely woven linen (*étamine*), embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes. It is disposed in each panel as follows:—a rectangular compartment at either end, from beside which rises a border of foliations alternating with blossoms, along the sides of the panel; the rest of the pattern is symmetrically grouped so as to compose a row of four medallions. The foliations are mauve, which is the dominant colour of this embroidery and, for the most part, outlines the blossoms; the latter are white, yellow,

pink, salmon-colour, green, and light blue. Each of the side panels is united to the central one by a band composed of 13 strips of silk ribbon stitched together; the middle strip has a woven pattern of small floral sprays, between borders of chevron pattern, in colours on a green ground; six ribbons, narrower than the middle strip, but not of uniform width, are arranged on either side of the latter, in the following order of colours:—salmon-colour, yellow, purple, cream-colour, and light blue. Each panel has, at its lower end, a narrow border of drawnwork with white silk embroidery, having a repeating pattern of counterchanged floral sprays, separated by chevron ornament. The panels are fringed.* 18th century. PLATES I & II.

L. 9 ft., W. 5 ft 11½ in. Given in 1915 by T. B. Clarke-Thornhill, Esq. Neg. nos. 44686/7.

332—1894. **Curtain,** now in two panels, of loosely woven linen (*étamine*), embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes. It is disposed in each panel as follows:—a broad band at the lower end, from which rises, along the sides and across the upper end of the panel, a border consisting of a continuous wavy stem, bearing blossoms and curved foliage alternately right and left; the rest of the pattern is grouped symmetrically so as to compose a row of 13 small medallions, down the middle of the panel. The foliations are mauve, which is the dominant colour of this embroidery, and outlines the blossoms; the blossoms are red, yellow, light blue, and white. Each of the panels is united to the central one by a band composed of five strips of silk ribbon stitched together; the middle strip, which is broader than the others, is dark green and has no pattern; two

* The stitch employed in this curtain is stated by M. G. Marçais (L'Exposition d'Art Musulman d'Alger, 1905) to bear the name of *zelîledj*, which he interprets as *point turc* or *point losangé;* the same stitch is used for 332–1894, 673–1898, and T. 63–1915.

ribbons, of nearly uniform width, are arranged on either side, in the following order of colours :—olive and cream-colour. Each panel has, at its lower end, two borders, one broad and one narrow, of drawnwork with white silk embroidery, having a repeating pattern of lozenges, rosettes and chevron ornament. 18th century.

PLATE II.

L. 7 ft. 6½ in., W. 3 ft. 10 in. A third panel has been transferred to Circulation. Acquired in 1894. Neg. no. 44688.

653—1893. **Curtain Panel** of linen, embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes. It is disposed as follows :—a rectangular compartment at the lower end, from beside which rises a border of blossom-bearing foliations; the rest of the pattern is symmetrically grouped so as to compose a row of four medallions and part of a fifth. The foliations are mauve, which is the dominant colour of this embroidery; the blossoms are white, cream-colour, and different shades of blue; they are outlined in dark brown silk. At the lower end is a narrow border of drawnwork with white silk embroidery, having a pattern of intersecting chevron ornament. The panel is fringed. 18th century.

L. 7 ft. 6 in., W. 22 in. Another panel from the same curtain has been transferred to Circulation. Acquired in 1893.

654—1893. **Curtain Panel** of linen, embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes, and of detached floral sprays. It is disposed as follows :—a rectangular compartment at the lower end, from which rises a border of floral sprays along the sides of the panel; the rest of the pattern is symmetrically grouped so as to compose two medallions, one above the other. The foliations are mauve, which is the dominant colour of this embroidery; the blossoms are white, yellow, mauve, and different shades

T. 391—1912. TOWEL-SCARF. 18th century. (p. 10.)

T. 59—1915. CURTAIN. 18th century. (p. 5.)

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of blue; they are outlined in dark brown silk. On the left side are ten strips of silk ribbon stitched together; the middle strip, which is broader than the rest, has a woven pattern of small floral sprays, between borders of chevron pattern, in colours on a salmon-coloured ground; nine ribbons, of nearly uniform width, are arranged, five on the right and four on the left of the middle strip in the following order of colours :—(on the right) light blue, cream-colour, brown, yellow, light blue; (on the left) light blue, cream-colour, brown, yellow. The panel is fringed. 18th century.

L. 6 ft. 1 in., W. 4 ft. 6 ½ in. Acquired in 1893.

673—1898. **Curtain Panel** of loosely woven linen (*étamine*), embroidered with coloured silks; it is made up of parts of two panels stitched together. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes, and of detached floral sprays. It is disposed as follows:—a rectangular compartment at the lower end, from beside which rises a border of floral sprays along the sides of the panel; the rest of the pattern is symmetrically grouped so as to compose a row of three complete and two incomplete medallions. The foliations are mauve, which is the dominant colour of this embroidery, and, for the most part, outlines the blossoms; the blossoms are white, yellow, salmon-colour, crimson, green, and different shades of blue. At the lower end is a narrow border of drawnwork with white silk embroidery, having a pattern of counterchanged floral sprays, separated by chevron ornament. 18th century.

L. 7 ft. 11½ in., W. 16½ in. Acquired in 1898.

267—1896. **Towel-Scarf** (*tenchîfa*) of loosely woven linen (*étamine*), embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes, symmetrically arranged; it covers the whole of the ground, with the exception of a narrow pillar-shaped

space. The foliations are mostly red and dark blue, which is the dominant colour of this embroidery, but some of them are mauve. The blossoms are white, yellow, mauve, green, brown, light blue, pink, and salmon-colour; they are outlined in dark brown silk. There are two narrow borders near either end, of drawnwork with white silk embroidery, having a repeating pattern of rosettes with hexagons, separated by oblique bands containing rows of detached leaves. The towel-scarf is fringed. 18th century.

L. 10 ft. 5 in., W. 14½ in. Acquired in 1896.

T. 14—1909. Towel-Scarf (*tenchîfa*) of loosely woven linen (*étamine*), embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes, which are symmetrically grouped so as to compose a row of four medallions; and of detached floral sprays, some of them occupying the spaces between the medallions, and the rest forming a border along the sides of the panel. The foliations are red and dark blue, which are the dominant colours of this embroidery; the blossoms are white, pink, mauve, yellow, and different shades of green. At the lower end is a narrow border of drawnwork with white silk embroidery, having a repeating pattern of counterchanged triangles. The towel-scarf is fringed. 18th century.

L. 6 ft. ½ in., W. 15 in. Given in 1909 by C. M. Marling, Esq., C.B., C.M.G. Neg. no. 44684.

T. 391—1912. Towel-Scarf (*tenchîfa*) of loosely woven linen (*étamine*), embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes, symmetrically arranged, and detached floral sprays; it covers the whole of the ground, with the exception of a pillar-shaped space in the middle. The foliations are mostly red and dark blue, which are the dominant colours of this embroidery, but some of them are mauve; the

blossoms are white, yellow, mauve, green, and light blue; they are outlined in dark brown silk. There are two narrow borders, near either end, of drawnwork with silk embroidery, having a repeating pattern of rosettes. The towel-scarf is fringed. 18th century. PLATE III.

L. (including fringe) 7 ft. 10 in., W. 16½ in. Acquired in 1912. Neg. no. 44684.

T. 64—1915. Towel-Scarf (*tenchîfa*) of loosely woven linen (*étamine*), embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern consists of blossoms springing from foliations of various shapes, symmetrically arranged; it covers the whole of the ground, with the exception of a narrow pillar-shaped space in the middle. The foliations are red and dark blue, which are the dominant colours of this embroidery, but some of them are mauve. The blossoms are white, yellow, mauve, green, brown, light blue, pink, and salmon-colour; they are outlined in dark brown silk. There are two narrow borders, near either end, of drawnwork with white silk embroidery, having a repeating pattern of rosettes within hexagons, separated by oblique bands containing rows of detached leaves. The towel-scarf is fringed. 18th century. FRONTISPIECE.

L. 7 ft. 7 in., W. 11 in. Given in 1915 by T. B. Clarke-Thornhill, Esq. Neg. no. 44683.

880—1897. Head-Scarf (*benîqa*) of cotton, embroidered with coloured silks. The pattern is disposed as follows:—On the centre-piece, a semi-circular medallion, composed of carnations and a variety of blossoms springing from delicate scrolls, symmetrically grouped; a row of small blossom-bearing scrolls, conjoined in pairs, encircles the centre-piece and forms a narrow border round the whole of the head-scarf. The scrolls are mauve, which is the dominant colour of this embroidery; the blossoms are pink, white, yellow, brown, and light blue. Probably early 19th century. FRONTISPIECE.

L. 6 ft. 5⅝ in., W. 8¼ in. Acquired in 1897. Neg. no. 44683.

T. 63—1915. **Head-Scarf** (*benîqa*) of loosely woven linen (*étamine*), embroidered with coloured silks and gold and silver thread. The centre-piece is peaked into a cap, the two sides of which are united behind by a projecting strip of stiffened blue ribbon, embroidered with yellow silk and gold thread on the underside. The pattern is disposed as follows:—On the centre-piece three species of large flowers, including tulips, are grouped symmetrically about a foliation, from which they spring. Small detached floral sprays are arranged, alternately in twos and threes, down the whole length of the lappets; similar sprays decorate the border. At the lower end of each lappet is a large foliation enclosing a flower. There is a narrow edging of dark blue silk both to the centre-piece and to the lappets. Red and dark blue are the dominant colours. The other colours used are gold, silver, light blue, mauve, salmon-colour, and green. Along the front of the centre-piece, and at the lower ends of the lappets are narrow borders of drawnwork with yellow silk and gold thread embroidery. The panels are fringed. 18th century. FRONTISPIECE.

L. of each lappet (including head-piece) 3 ft. 5 in., W. 7¾ in. Given in 1915 by T. B. Clarke-Thornhill, Esq. Neg. no. 44683.

T. 62—1915. **Panel** of cotton, embroidered with coloured silks; some of the details are in drawnwork. The pattern is disposed in four horizontal rows as follows:—In the uppermost row are three large floral sprays; these alternate with two floral sprays of another kind and of smaller size, which form the row immediately below. In the next row are three conventionalised vases, in each of which is a carnation, rising straight from the centre of a symmetrical grouping of blossoms springing from delicate scrolls; in the space between vase and vase, and at either end of the row, is a small flower on an upright stem between two scrolls. In the lowest row a large inverted flower, with blossom-bearing scrolls

springing from either side of the stem, occupies the middle ; it is flanked by an alternation of curved and pointed foliations and blossoms springing from scrolls ; each of the foliations is composed of two leafy stems and encloses a stem bearing four blossoms. The scrolls and most of the foliage are mauve, which is the dominant colour of this embroidery ; the flowers and blossoms are mauve, cream-colour, and different shades of red, pink, blue, green, and yellow. Near the lower end is a narrow border of drawnwork with white silk embroidery, having a repeating pattern of rosettes within hexagons. The panel is fringed all the way round. Probably early 19th century. FRONTISPIECE.

L. 1 ft. 6 in., W. 1 ft. 4½ in. Given in 1915 by T. B. Clarke-Thornhill, Esq. Neg. no. 44683.

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